

Message Text

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43

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 641

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 0524

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AR, US

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR

1. I HAD A LONG LUNCHEON CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 10, AT HIS REQUEST, WITH ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR GUILLERMO DE LA PLAZA. DE LA PLAZA IS AN OLD FRIEND WHO IS SINCERELY FRIENDLY TO THE US, HONEST AND TRUSTWORTHY. I BELIEVE HIM TO BE WELL THOUGHT OF IN HIS GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND TO HAVE CLOSE TIES WITH THE ARGENTINE MILITARY. THE SUBJECT MAINLY ON HIS MIND WAS HIS OWN COUNTRY RATHER THAN URUGUAYAN AFFAIRS. I AM REPORTING THIS CONVERSATION AS BEING OF INTEREST TO THE DEPARTMENT AND TO AMBASSADOR HILL WHO MAY WISH TO COMMENT ON HIS VIEWS.

2. DE LA PLAZA BELIEVES THE SITUATION IN ARGENTINA IS COMING VERY RAPIDLY TO A DEFINITION. HE HAD EXPECTED, HERETOFORE, A DEFINITIVE CHANGE BY THE END OF APRIL BUT NOW BELIEVES IT WILL BE MUCH SOONER. WHAT WILL EMERGE, HE SAYS, IS A SOLUTION ON A URUGUAYAN STAYLE "A LA BORDABERRY", WITH THE MILITARY TAKING A STRONG STAND TO PROVIDE A POWER BASE FOR THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WILL BE "WITH OR WITHOUT ISABLEA", HE SAID, BUT IN THE BEGINNING AT LEAST IT WILL NOT MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE WHO OCCUPIES THE PRESIDENCY AS A FIGUREHEAD.

3. THE TASK OF THIS NEW GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, WILL BE TO RESTORE
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STABILITY, SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE IN ARGENTINE LIFE, INSTITUTIONS

AN ECONOMY. IT WILL BE NECESSARY, HE SAID, FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE A VERY STRONG "DURO" STAND AND TO ACT WITH "GREAT ENERGY" TO RESTORE PUBLIC ORDER. THIS WILL MEAN DOMINATION OF THE TERRORISTS AND GUERILLA MOVEMENTS AND THE DISARMING OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT. WHILE THERE WILL BE REGARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, HE SAID, THE UPPERMOST TAKS IN THE OUTSET WILL BE TO ACHIEVE THE NECESSARY STABILITY FOR THE LONG-TERM PRESERVATION OF LIBERTY AND RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN ARGENTINA.

4. ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS ENTERPRISE DE LA PLAZA FEELS IS THE SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE USG AND ITS IMMEDIATE SUPPORT. ARGENTINA WILL DESPERATELY NEED FINANCIAL BACKING OF THE US FOR ECONOMIC RESTORATION EITHER DIRECTLY FROM THE GOVERNMENT OR THROUGH PRIVATE BANKS WITH CLEAR USG BACKING AND SUPPORT. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF US IDENTIFICATION WITH THIS NATIONAL EFFORT, HE SAID, WILL BE CRUCIAL. HE PRAYS, HE SAID, THAT THE US WILL RECOGNIZE THE HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF THIS MOMENT WHEN IT COMES AND NOT LOSE THE CHANCE TO ASSIST IN RESTORING ARGENTINA AS A STABLE, RELIABLE ANTI-COMMUNIST PARTNER IN THE SOUTHER CONE. HE OBVIOUSLY FEARS AN ALOOF OR EVEN NEGATIVE US REACTION SUCH AS HAS GREETED CHILEAN EFFORTS, AND TO SOME EXTENT URUGUAYAN.

5. IN COMMENTING IN GENERAL ON OBSERVING THE ARGENTINE SCENE, AMBASSADOR DE LA PLAZA STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE MILITARY, THEIR PSYCHOLOGY AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING. HE SAID IT WOULD BE A GREAT MISTAKE TO PAY TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO THE POLITICIANS TODAY WHO ARE RAPIDLY BECOMING DISCREDITED BECAUSE OF THE CHAOTIC CONDITIONS AND HAVE NO REAL POWER. THE MILITARY RELUCTANCE TO ASSUME A PRIMARY ROLE AGAIN IS AND HAS BEEN GENUINE, DE LA PLAZA SAID, NEVERTHELESS, THE MOMENT OF DECISION FOR THEM AND FOR ACTION IS ALMOST AT HAND AND THEY ARE NOW PREPARED REASSUME POWER.

6. AMBASSADOR HILL WILL KNOW FAR BETTER THAN I HOW TO EVALUATE DE LA PLAZA'S VIEWS AND COMMENTS. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT HE ASKED URGENTLY TO SEE ME IN PRIVATE AND AS MUCH AS SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SPEAK TO ME--I ASSUME BY HIS MILITARY CONTACTS. I MADE PERFECTLY CLEAR TO DE LA PLAZA THAT WHILE I

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AM ALWAYS INTERESTED IN DEVELOPMENTS IN ARGENTINA PROFESSIONALLY AND FOR THEIR IMPACT ON URUGUAY, THAT MY AUTHORITY AS AMBASSADOR IS STRICTLY LIMITED TO THIS COUNTRY. I TOLD HIM ALSO THAT I KNEW HIM TO BE HIGHLY REGARDED BY EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES AND THAT I WAS SURE THAT HIS VIEWS WOULD BE FULLY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY AMBASSADOR HILL.

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